

migrants

112 E. 19th St., Room 405

New York 3, New York

June 12, 1958

Dear

Hank

I have just been told that there is a \$200 scholarship available for a migrant young person who may be interested in attending the Encampment for Citizenship which is described in the enclosed literature. Also, for the first time this year, a second Encampment will take place on the west coast in Berkeley.

The time is short and I therefore take this quick means of sending several of these folders to a few friends about the country who may know of a likely applicant. If so, please pass it on.

Sincerely yours,

Jay

May Bennett

Greetings!

An Evaluation of the Encampment for Citizenship

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It required much courage from the staff of the Encampment for Citizenship to trust the fate of a venture they held dear and worked hard over for ten years to the results of an independent, scientific evaluation. Such courage is rare—many agencies prefer to go about their activities with little knowledge of their efficacy. But such courage can be very rewarding, for the results of careful inquiry can truly establish the effects of an endeavor in democratic education such as the Encampment for Citizenship and provide sound, if not always reassuring, guidance for the future.

In turn, a heavy burden of responsibility is placed on the Evaluators themselves. They must be sympathetic, but they must do their level best to be objective and rigorous, for that is the whole point of an evaluation. The

This statement, summarizing the 300-page report compiled by the Bureau, was presented by Dr. Hyman at the Encampment's Tenth Anniversary Citizenship Education Conference on March 24, 1956.

burden on Dr. Wright and myself, the directors of the study, felt especially heavy. We dreaded the moment when we might have to report that the venture did not achieve its high purposes, for the history of so many endeavors in character education is that their good intentions are shattered upon the granite-like resistance of people to change. Nevertheless, we went at our task carefully. As a matter of fact, I might say that we did everything in our power to make it hard for the Encampment to prove itself. For only then would we feel that whatever measure of success was demonstrated would be compelling proof.

Now, Dr. Wright and I and the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia are glad that we undertook the inquiry. We feel that we have participated in something worthwhile, and I say worthwhile with full knowledge. For the complete report documents in rich detail the many ways in which the youth of the Encampment change for the better, and I would assert that the evidence is unassailable that these effects are produced by the Encampment itself. Let me read to you some of the measures of success. I quote only a few of the positive findings:

Compared to most American youth, the campers in the 1955 Encampment were an unusually democratic group upon ar-

rival. After six weeks, many changes occurred—making them an even more democratically oriented and effectively committed group of campers:

They

- became more appreciative of our traditional civil liberties.
- became more tolerant of freedom for non-conformists.
- became stronger in defense of civil rights for minorities.
- became more optimistic about solving pressing social problems.
- felt less sense of social isolation.
- showed a small increase in tendency toward political action through accepted social channels.
- exemplified the philosophy of the dignity of man in the friendships they formed irrespective of race during the summer.

Now the problem of evaluation is complicated by one additional fact. Once change is initiated it may know no bounds—and good and bad consequences may run side-by-side. The side effects, the undesirable outcomes had to be checked. I quote from the report to show how much the balance was swung all to the good.

These youth did NOT—

- become unrealistic in views as to the ease of solving problems.
- become more provincial in their con-

ceptions of a democratic society.

- become prejudiced in reverse. Friendships were formed proportionately toward whites and Negroes.
- become more “radical” in their political ideology.
- become alienated from the common man, nor harshened in their view of the “average American,” nor show any increased tendency to see Americans as unbound by moral imperatives.

How were such findings obtained? The claims that the Encampment succeeded in its goals of making youth more democratic and effective was dependent on a purely objective method. By a series of standard instruments, the status of the campers at the end of the six weeks was measured. But it is obvious that their superior qualities at the end of the experience would not, by itself, permit the conclusion that the Encampment had produced the effects. They might have been that good to start with. Consequently, these same measuring instruments had been used at the beginning of the Encampment. In that way, we could determine what changes had occurred between the beginning and end of the Encampment. The differences constitute the only reliable way of assessing effectiveness.

But you may well argue that the changes

might have occurred anyway. During the six weeks of the summer, simultaneous with the Encampment, the youth were growing; they were responsive to events in the larger world. To isolate the intrinsic effect of the Encampment demands that the influence of these uncontrolled factors be measured and separated in the analysis. As in many experiments, control groups had to be employed. I shall not go into the complex details of the control group procedures, but I can assure you that the report establishes that the sheer passage of six weeks, the sheer process of growth, the sheer responsiveness to the larger world could not have produced the changes I listed apart from the Encampment experience itself.

But you may still say that these changes were transient—they would be dissipated upon return home. Within the Encampment, the experience is still being lived and the host of forces that are the ethos of the Encampment nourish the democratic spirit. At home, by contrast, the campers confront many new forces which run counter to the principles learned. An apt image is the white camper learning the spirit of racial equality in the Encampment and returning to the deep South. What erosion of values occurs under such conditions? This was examined by us through a follow-up study of the campers six weeks after return to their homes. For some of the find-

ings, again I read from the report:

Campers as a group . . .

- showed no weakening of their resolve or reversion in ideology.
- do not decline in their faith in the possibility of group action within the home setting.
- do not show any decline in tolerance.
- do not lose their optimism about the solution of social problems although more realism tinges their perspectives.
- do not lose their orientation toward action.
- do not lose their sentiments on behalf of civil liberties and civil rights.

The gains were strong despite adversity:

- the Negro campers, by and large, maintain their ideological gains.
- the Southern campers maintain their ideological gains.

But they did show . . .

- some increased sense that the larger society is unbound by moral imperatives.
- some signs of alienation from the average American.
- considerable attrition on the scene of action due to lack of desire to act, lack of trying despite desire, or lack of clarity in the course of action.

The persistence of the effects of the 1955 Encampment had now been traced—but only through a six week period following return to the community. What about the long run

picture—the possible slow erosion of values and interests under the pressure of adult responsibilities. To determine this, a sample of alumni of previous Encampments were studied by mail questionnaires. The alumni of 1954 had been away from the Encampment not merely for six weeks, but for one year; the alumni of 1946 had had nine whole years since their Encampment. These past cohorts of the Encampment could be used to project the picture of the 1955 group forward ten years into the future. Again I read from the report to convey the flavor of these long run effects.

The alumni of past Encampments, removed from its influence for periods of one to nine years, show generally a parallel profile of attitudes. Despite the passage of time, the alumni furthest removed show no marked lessening of sentiments on behalf of tolerance and civil liberties.


It should be clear that our general conclusion is predicated upon the most conservative evidence. The evaluation was done by a disinterested agency, unhindered in its activities. The design of the study involved repeated measurements using standard instruments. The total change observed at the end of six weeks of Encampment was appraised in the light of uncontrolled factors which might also have operated to change the campers. The measures we employed were comprehensive and included tests of possible undesirable con-

sequences of Encampment. The study was not limited to change demonstrated within the congenial setting of the Encampment but extended to include measurements in the less congenial, perhaps even hostile, environments of the home communities. Finally, the long run effects were traced by inference from a study of the alumni of past years. All these features make our conclusions conservative, they handicap any findings of change as a result of the Encampment.

On this basis I can inform you with full confidence that the Encampment for Citizenship is a rare and successful experiment in democratic education. There could be no higher compliment for its staff.

For further information:

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